

THE Asylum

VOL. 36 NO. 4



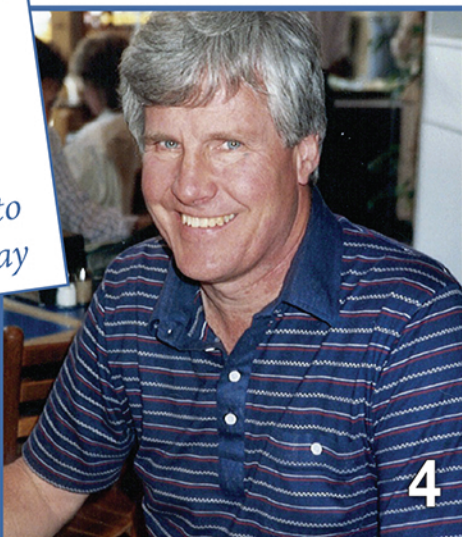
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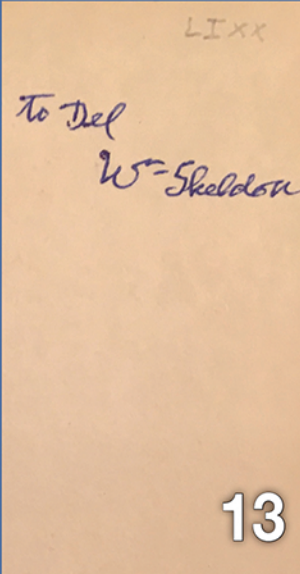


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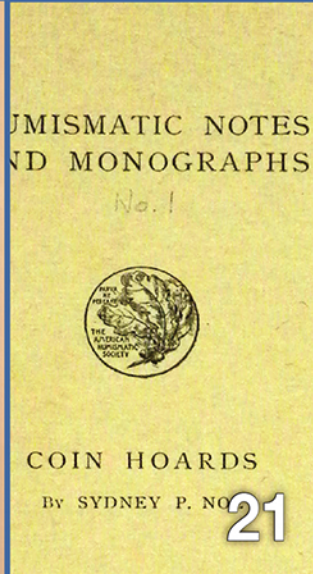
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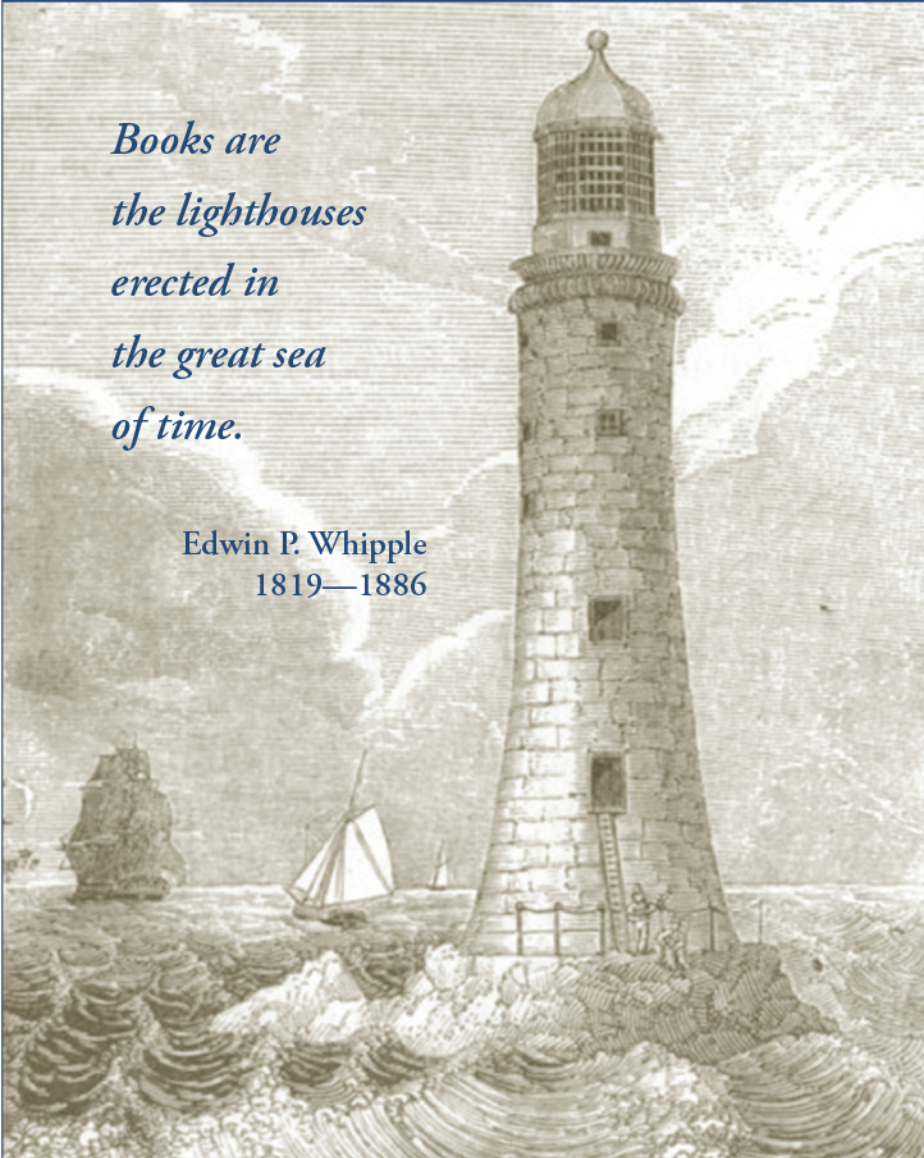
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*Books are
the lighthouses
erected in
the great sea
of time.*

Edwin P. Whipple
1819—1886



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Tom Harrison
NBS President

Message from the President

Would you like to significantly impact the vitality of the NBS? While our contributions to many larger organizations may seem negligible, your commitment, modest or substantial, will play a critical role in the future of the NBS. The benefit action at this summer's ANA convention clearly demonstrated that an increased number of generous donors and bidders produced amazing results. This was a wonderful example of the membership stepping up to ensure not only the stability, but also the vibrancy of our organization.

So, whether you are a longtime member or have just recently joined our ranks, your contributions to *The Asylum*, our benefit auction, or maybe most of all, your ideas for the betterment of the NBS will play a pivotal role in our success. It is only through increased membership involvement that we will continue to thrive during our 40th year and beyond. Please know your past efforts and future enthusiastic dedication are greatly appreciated, and yes, you will significantly impact the vitality of the NBS.

May your numismatic library provide investigation, discovery, and most of all, enjoyment.



Happy 40th, NBS!

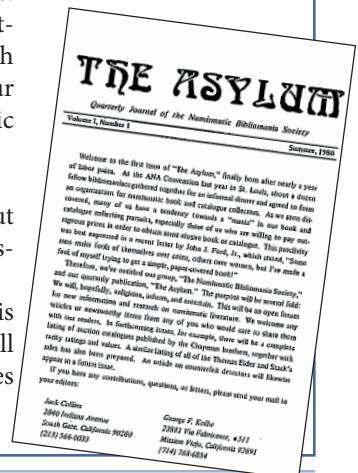
In 2019, the Numismatic Bibliomania Society will be turning 40! To celebrate, we are compiling a special anniversary edition of *The Asylum* where members share their stories from its inception through the years.

Please send your remembrances about live literature sales, the invasion of Louisville or Pittsburgh (among others), all of the interesting personalities our hobby attracts, and any stories involving numismatic literature and the NBS.

Photographs are especially wanted and needed!

Our deadline for submissions is April 1, 2019, but please start the wheels turning now. Send all submissions to nbsasylum@gmail.com.

We hope you will enthusiastically embrace this project that will not only be enjoyed today, but will record numismatic literature events and personalities for future bibliophiles that otherwise may be lost.



Del Bland (1933–2018)

By David F. Fanning

The Numismatic Bibliomania Society lost one of our charter members on October 16, with the death of U.S. large cent expert Del Bland. Bland, 84, was known for his work tracing the provenances of early U.S. large cents. He began this project in 1973 and continued to work on it for the rest of his life, despite declining eyesight and other difficulties.

The extent of Bland's project can scarcely be overstated. Conducting extensive research into numismatic auction catalogues, he traced the ownership and sale history of all early large cents (1793–1814). The results of his work were stored in 272 matching binders that lined the walls of his home office, generally one binder per Sheldon variety (though rarer varieties shared binders). Catalogues were photocopied and (in the case of readily available modern catalogues) cut up to provide photographs and descriptions. Prices were recorded, as were buyers.



We have gotten used to the idea that the provenance of our coins matters and that the ownership history should be retained for future collectors, but the value of provenance was not widely accepted when Bland began his project. This information, when available, was treated merely as a curiosity. Bland's efforts did much to convince the copper community of the inherent value of the history of individual coins.

One of the more immediately recognized uses of Bland's information was in the development and refinement of the condition census. Condensed drafts of his census circulated through the 1970s and 1980s in photocopy form, and were distilled for preservation in print with the publication of *Walter Breen's Encyclopedia of Early United States Cents 1793–1814* (Wolfeboro: Bowers & Merena, 2000). Given the number of significant large cent sales that have taken place since then, Bland's endeavors continued apace, with friends frequently providing him with information as he became less able to travel as extensively as he once did.

Del Bland provided a model for the practical use of a comprehensive numismatic library, and his generosity in sharing the material he so painstakingly developed will remain a shining example of cooperation and collaboration in our field.

An Afternoon at Princeton University

By Ray Williams

While doing some research for another article, I stumbled across a website for Princeton University about its “Capping Liberty” exhibit. This site had a paragraph about Henry Phillips and his groundbreaking work on colonial and Continental Currency, *Historical Sketches of the Paper Currency of the American Colonies*. Of course I was familiar with his work, but the copy at Princeton was the “*Author’s copy presented to Isaac Green, April 17, 1890, with banknotes inserted into interleaved sheets.*” This sounded so intriguing, I just had to see it!

I sent an email to Dr. Alan Stahl at the university asking if he was aware of this book and how could I go about seeing it. A reply was received the next day. Not only did Dr. Stahl know about the book, but it was located in a vault in his office! So we made arrangements to meet for lunch at Panera, across the street from the Firestone Library. After a delicious salad, we walked across to the library, checked through security and entered his office. It was a little like Star Trek where a retina scan was done to gain access—very cool technology!

Now why would I want to see the author’s copy of this book? Well, by the description of actual colonial bills being mounted on interleaved pages, I just had to see it in person! For those unfamiliar, this 1865 publication of the research by Phillips is the first well-done study about our early paper currency. In the 1900s, Harley Freeman



One volume opened to some of the interleaved pages showing how the bills could be viewed on both sides after being pasted into the cut-outs.

took the information from Phillips and made a book of ledger pages, where a chapter was made for each colony and for Continental Currency. Each page was dedicated to a specific authorization date. On each page was the information for what denominations were authorized, the quantity issued, signers of the bills, personal notes and information about the bills in Freeman's collection. Freeman's work is available on the Newman Numismatic Portal (NNP).

When Eric Newman purchased Freeman's collection intact, he insisted on the ledgers being included, and they were. Newman used Freeman's work as the foundation for his *Early Paper Money of America*. This book has gone through five editions and is the standard reference that anyone collecting colonial paper should own. If any reader owns colonial bills purchased from one of the Newman auctions, you can look at Freeman's work on the NNP and most likely find yours by date, denomination and serial number along with pedigree information not in the auction catalogs.

Several years ago, I thought it would be fun to attempt to get a set of February 1776 NJ bills that would include the signatures of all those that were authorized to sign. To make a long story short(er), I went back to the actual legislation and discovered that the list of names in *The Early Paper Money of America* for this date of issue had multiple errors and omissions. I sent my research to Eric Newman through Maureen Levine. Eric agreed that my research was correct and would be included in the 6th edition.



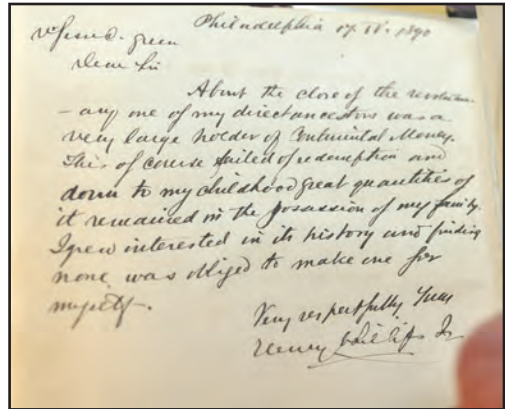
The spine of the two Phillips books

It appears that Phillips had made an error, which carried through to modern publications.

Being that Phillips presented these two volumes to a Mr. Green in 1890, as inscribed in one of the volumes, I was hoping that in the 25 years that Phillips owned it, he might have annotated his copy with updates and corrections. I couldn't wait to see the actual work.

Back to my visit... Dr. Stahl cleared some desk space for me, disappeared into the vault and returned with the two volumes. I love old bindings with marbled covers! The thickness of both books was due to all the extra pages displaying actual bills. Phillips had cut holes into the pages precise-

ly and pasted the bills. This allowed the viewing of both sides. These pages were inserted at the end of each chapter and included bills from that chapter. In general, the bills were well worn. There were some nice examples too. Most were common issues, but there was a May 1775 \$20 Continental Currency and others not often seen. I did not look at every page, but if I had to hazard a guess, I'd estimate that between the two volumes there were between 100 and 200 bills.



The inscription written by Phillips

I did go specifically to the February 1776 NJ page to see if Phillips had discovered his errors and made annotations to correct that section. It was not to be. There were no annotations, none anywhere that I could find. I might assume that after Phillips wrote the book, he lost interest in pursuing future research. Phillips died in 1895 five years after parting with these two volumes.

I couldn't find much online about Phillips. According to biographer Pete Smith, he was born in Philadelphia on September 6, 1838, lived his entire life in Philadelphia and died on June 6, 1895. He was admitted to the bar at age 21 and was an active member of the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia.

Written in 1890 inside the front of one of the two volumes is an inscription to the new owner of the books. I can't make out for certain what the first name is, but the last name is Green:

"About the close of the revolution
-any one of my direct ancestors was a
very large holder of Continental Money.
This of course failed of redemption and
down to childhood great quantities of
it remained in the possession of my family.
I grew interested in its history and finding
none was obliged to make one for myself.

Very Respectfully Yours

Henry Phillips Jr."

This seems to be the case of a numismatist wanting a reference in the field of his interest, and finding none, he wrote it himself. An admirable motivation in which he was very successful! At age 52, he relegated these books to a new owner. Why? Was it sold or gifted? Never married, he had no children who might cherish a family heirloom. Maybe someday someone will stumble across the answers. I'm glad that

this important work now resides in an institution where its importance is known and appreciated.

What a fun way to spend a Thursday afternoon!



(left) Dr. Alan Stahl at his desk studying the Phillips book.

(below) Henry Phillips



Image used with permission of John Lupia of Numismaticwall.com

Off the Shelf: A Deluxe Edition of an 1899 German Sale of American Coins

By David F. Fanning

Most collectors of American coins assume that few foreign auctions will have anything to offer them, and even fewer will prove to be important in the long run. A handful of modern sales that fit into this category will come to mind—the Sotheby's sale of the Palace Collection of King Farouk in 1954,¹ Glendining's 1956 Taffs sale,² Christie's Lord St. Oswald sale of 1964³—but little else. Some may be familiar with the 1917 Watters sale⁴ and 1927 Peltzer sale⁵ (both Glendining's), but for the most part memories fade with time.

All of the sales mentioned above are British, with catalogues in English (though the Farouk sale was, of course, held in Cairo). This obviously comes as no surprise. What is surprising is the fact that a few highly interesting sales of American material were held in Germany during the late 19th century. Even more strangely, they focused less on U.S. federal coins than on tokens, medals, and other esoterica, as well as Canadian, Mexican, and even Central and South American coins.

Adolph Weyl (1842–1901) was a French-born German numismatist who began trading in coins around 1874.⁶ While the final quarter of the 19th century witnessed the birth of a number of German coin firms, Weyl's efforts were unusual in that he cast a very wide net, specializing in world coins and seeming to especially enjoy coins from the eastern world and the Americas. He was influenced in these directions by his friend Jules Fonrobert, whose enormous collection he catalogued and sold in 1878 and 1879.⁷ The Fonrobert sales were some of the largest of the time, consisting of over 16,000 lots sold across several sales. The first part included 6205 lots of American and Canadian coins, medals and tokens from colonial to contemporary times. Weyl was active in the hobby, publishing the *Berliner Münzblätter* and *Numismatische Correspondenz*, and conducting well over 150 auction sales.⁸

Weyl may be familiar to some for his inadvertent role in the controversy over the origins of the Dexter 1804 dollar. This coin was included in Weyl's October 1884 auction sale,⁹ where it was purchased by the Chapman brothers. The catalogue (which today is very rare) included a photographically printed illustration of the coin, including a close-up of the coin's edge (an impressive innovation at the time). The illustration is a *Lichtdruck*, being the result of a photographic printing process based on a photograph not of the coin itself but of a plaster cast of the coin. This was the norm in European auction catalogues of the day and for quite some time after. Photographing casts was far easier than photographing coins, whose varying reflectivity, coloring, toning, and textures all serve to complicate the process. A lack of familiarity with colotype-illustrated catalogues has led some American numismatists to suspect that



Adolph Weyl's 147th auction sale, offering a *Sammlung amerikanischer Münzen & Medaillen*: (a) regular edition; (b) special edition on thick paper.

Weyl didn't even possess the coin in the question, and that it was a phantom placed in the sale by the Chapman brothers to create a European provenance for a coin they otherwise couldn't account for.

Weyl continued to offer significant coins of the Americas throughout his career, and on at least one occasion printed a special edition of a catalogue. Beginning on April 11, 1899, Weyl held his 147th auction, simply titled *Sammlung amerikanischer Münzen und Medaillen* (*A Collection of American Coins and Medals*).¹⁰ This is an important sale of over 4000 lots, including some 200 lots of Canadian coins, tokens and medals, 800 lots of numismatic objects from the United States, and a variety of rare and significant Mexican and Latin American pieces. Weyl's proficiency with this material is truly impressive, though it seems odd to encounter a 19th-century German catalogue aptly describing Pittsburgh trade tokens, Confederate paper money, and copper coins struck in Massachusetts “nach der Unabhängigkeits-Erklärung.” The catalogue was issued with four *Lichtdruck* plates, depicting Franco-American jetons, Bolivian sueldos, Colombian silver, medals honoring Leandro Gómez for his heroic defense of Paysandú during the Uruguayan War—even a Morgan dollar whose reverse has been shaved and reengraved with a scene celebrating California, complete with a *Grizzlybär*.

The catalogue is scarce but, given the tepid demand resulting from collectors' unfamiliarity with it, available from time to time. What seems to have been missed is that there are two versions of it. The usually seen catalogue has a front cover printed in black ink and is about 8 mm thick. The second has a cover printed exactly the

same as before, but in gilt ink instead of the usual black (see figures). Printed on thick paper, this version of the catalogue is about 13.5 mm thick. Both versions were bound with a cloth backing to the spine. There appear to be no other differences between the two. While it may be too much to say that the reasons behind this special edition have been lost to time, it is quite appropriate to say they are unknown to this author.



NOTES

1. Sotheby & Co. *The Palace Collections of Egypt. Catalogue of the Highly Important and Extremely Valuable Collection of Coins and Medals, the Property of the Republic of Egypt*. Cairo, Feb. 24–Mar. 6, 1954.
2. Glendining & Co. *Catalogue of the Collection of British, Colonial and Foreign Coins Formed by the Late H. W. Taffs, Esq.* London, Nov. 21–23, 1956.
3. Christie's. *Catalogue of English, Foreign and Important American Coins, the Property of Major the Lord St. Oswald, M.C. Removed from Nostell Priory, Wakefield, Yorkshire*. London, Oct. 13, 1964.
4. Glendining & Co. *The Collection of C.A. Watters, Esq., Liverpool. Catalogue of the Second Portion of the Collection of Manx, Colonial, American and Ancient Coins, Tokens and Medals*. London, June 14–15, 1917.
5. Glendining & Co. *Catalogue of the Peltzer Collection of American Coins*. London, June 20, 1927.
6. Rambach, Hadrien J. "A List of Coin Dealers in Nineteenth-Century Germany." *A Collection in Context: Kommentierte Edition der Briefe und Dokumente Sammlung Dr. Karl von Schöffler*. Stefan Krmnicek and Henner Hardt, editors. *Tübinger Numismatische Studien*, Band I. Tübingen: Tübingen University Press, 2017. Pages 63–84.
7. Weyl, Adolph. *Die Jules Fonrobert'sche Sammlung überseeischer Münzen und Medaillen. Ein Beitrag zur Münzgeschichte aussereuropäischer Länder. Amerika. I. Abtheilung: Nord-Amerika*. Berlin, 18. Februar 1878 und folgende Tage. *II. Abtheilung: Central-Amerika. A) Mexiko*. Berlin, 30. April 1878 und folgende Tage. *B) Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, San Salvador, Haity und die europäischen Besitzungen in Westindien*. Berlin, 28. Mai 1878 und folgende Tage. *III. Abtheilung: Süd-Amerika*. Berlin, 16. September 1878 und folgende Tage. *Verzeichniss von Münzen und Denkmünzen der Erdtheile Australien, Asien, Afrika und verschiedener mohammedanischer Dynastien der Jules Fonrobert'schen Sammlung*. Berlin, 14. Januar 1879 und folgende Tage.
8. Lupia III, John N. "Abraham Adolph Meyer Weyl." Numismaticmall.com. Accessed November 5, 2018. Both Lupia and Rambach claim that Weyl held around 300 auctions, but given that his April 1899 sale is denoted as his 147th and he died in December 1901, this would imply that he held around 150 sales in the final thirty-two months of his life—which seems excessive.
9. Weyl, Adolph. *Verzeichniss einer bedeutenden Sammlung von Münzen und Medaillen von Amerika, Australien, Asien und Afrika, sowie einer stattlichen Reihe Proklamations-Münzen von Spanien*. Berlin, 13 Oktober 1884 und folgende Tage.
10. Weyl, Adolph. *Sammlung amerikanischer Münzen & Medaillen*. Berlin, 11. April 1899 und folgende Tage.

EARLY AMERICAN CENTS



By DR. WILLIAM H. SHELDON

A completely informative handbook by an
authority on America's most cherished series of
old coins — the early pennies or large "coppers"
With fifty-one full page collotype plates and accompanying charts

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The Trautman-Bland copy of *Early American Cents*, which appeared as
lot 215 in Kolbe-Fanning sale #134.

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Del Bland's William H. Sheldon-Inscribed Copy of *Early American Cents*: Before the Sheriff Nabbed the Switcher

By Joel J. Orosz

Once the smoke had cleared, and the statues of the formerly-revered master had been toppled, what lingered was the acrid taste of disappointment in the once-but-not-future icon. How could the great copper scholar, the deviser of scientific systems of grading and valuation, the writer of romance and nostalgia about the old large cents, have so cynically flouted the veneration in which he was held? What motivated him to stoop to venal knavery, by depriving a museum of part of its collection, and researchers of its use? The detritus of a wrecked reputation stood in sharp contradistinction to the virtue of one of those scholars, a stolid toiler who gained nothing but the satisfaction of enabling justice by exposing the crimes of the thief lurking behind the curtain. It seemed most apropos that the hero of the hour was a man so physically imposing that one of his nicknames was "Tree," a sort of numismatic John Wayne, the new sheriff who cleaned up the frontier town of numismatics.

There was one other thing left after the sheriff nabbed the coin-switcher, a physical object connecting the two predating their confrontation, when the switcher's reputation was still intact, and the sheriff had not yet pinned on his badge. This object took the form of Dr. William H. Sheldon's first numismatic book, the groundbreaking *Early American Cents*, and the connection, a spare, but positive inscription to Del Bland. How freighted with irony can one inscription be, in light of later events? But that is not the whole story, for a previous owner of this very volume takes the tale into the Second World War, and introduces books galore, "Armed Services Editions", tens of millions of them, into the narrative. It may seem like a digression, but oddly it is not, for the story of Dr. Sheldon's service in World War Two is integral to understanding his fall from grace decades after the War itself had ended.

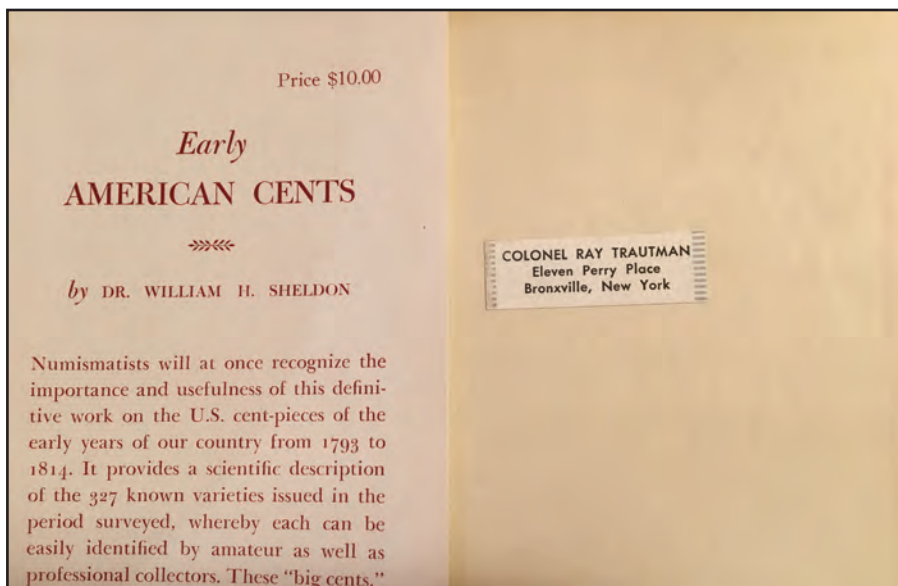
Dr. William H. Sheldon (1898-1977) was born in Rhode Island and educated at the University of Chicago, where he earned a Ph.D. in psychology in 1926, and an M.D. in 1933. He served in the U.S. Army during World War Two, rising to the rank of Major, and both before and after the War, spent a checkered academic career at various institutions of higher education. These years were all dedicated to his great insight that each human's personality is determined by the distinctive combination of morphological features (body types) they inherited: endomorphy (rounded and soft); mesomorphy (square and muscular); and ectomorphy (thin and fine-boned). In support of this theory, he persuaded many elite colleges to allow him to take nude

photographs of incoming first-year students (including, it is alleged, future President George H. W. Bush and future Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton). Sheldon sought to assign each student a three-digit number representing their “somatype”: a distinctive combination of the three body types. The somatype would accurately predict the type of personality the student possessed, from altruistic to delinquent. The net result of somatyping from thousands of nude photographs was Sheldon’s unwelcome finding that body type proved a highly unreliable guide to their psychological makeup. Confronted with the fact that human personality does not have biological foundations, he responded by fudging the data to make the evidence appear to support his theory. Caught out by several reviewers over the years, Sheldon’s life work of morphological typing is now consigned to the shadowy world of pseudo-science.

In his avocation of numismatics, Dr. Sheldon’s contributions have, on the whole, fared better. All of these contributions were crystalized into a single, pathbreaking volume, *Early American Cents*. As of 1949, numismatics had been a significant nationwide hobby for 90 years, and during those entire nine decades, large cent enthusiasts had been in the vanguard. You would never have known it, however, by examining the literature of large cent collecting. For the early dates (1793-1814), previous monographs had focused on individual years of the series: 1793s; 1794s; 1795s-1797s & 1800s; 1796s; 1798s-1799s; 1800s-1803s; and 1804s-1814s. These monographs had their merits—collectively, they identified the vast majority of varieties, and attached colorful names to some of them (who could resist 1794 varieties with names like *Coquette* or *Venus Marina*?) But the problems were manifold. While all of the early years were covered, it took ten books to do it, their quality and accuracy was all over the map, and by the mid-1940s, most of them were outdated. Copper collectors needed a single-volume guide to the early dates that was definitive and easy to read and use. In 1949, with *Early American Cents*, that was exactly what William H. Sheldon delivered.

The doctor decided to meld art and science in his magnum opus. He started by “Introducing the big cents,” sharing romantic tales of his New England boyhood trying to “make out” the old cents, and basking in the charm of the old coppers. Sheldon then shared a capsule history of the first U.S. Mint, and a review of the literature of large cents. The “art” portion completed, Sheldon turned “toward a ‘science’ of cent values.” He established a grading scale that ranged from Basal State 1 (identifiable and unmutilated) to condition 70 (flawless mint state). He also identified the *basal value* of each large cent, defined as the value which from 1925-1949 had come to be attached to a large cent variety in Basal State 1. If you graded a variety on the 1-70 scale, and multiplied that grade number by its basal value, you would get a “tolerably accurate” estimate of that coin’s market value. Suppose that a variety graded AU-50, and that the basal value for that variety was \$1.50, then the value of that coin at auction should be about \$75. Finally, he got to the heart of the book, a comprehensive “Collector’s List,” identifying 327 varieties of the early cents, of which he deemed 32 so rare as to be Non-Collectible (NC). For the remaining 295 varieties and six sub-varieties, he provided a continuous numbering system, careful descriptions of obverse and reverse, a high-quality illustration of each variety, and a listing of the condition census for each.

Early American Cents was a godsend to large cent collectors. It was a single volume

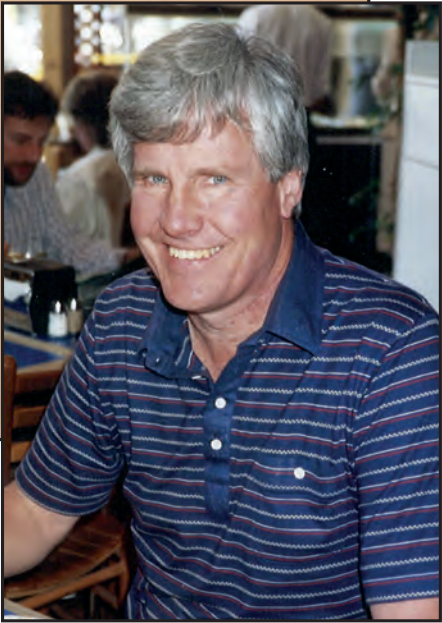
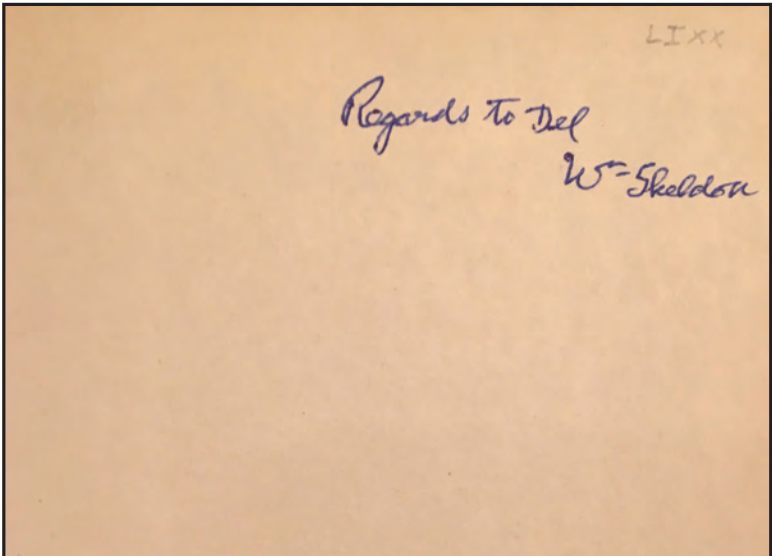


Colonel Ray Trautman's sticker on the inside front cover of the Trautman-Bland copy of *Early American Cents*.

that did it all, allowing early large cent aficionados to attribute their varieties, to grade them, and even to estimate their value. The grade number multiplied by the basal value did a good job of predicting auction results for large cents in major auctions in 1952 (New Netherlands Downing Sale) and 1954 (Stack's DuPont Sale). The hobby of large cent collecting experienced widespread growth throughout the 1950s and 1960s, in no small part because of Sheldon's scholarship.

Early American Cents was readily available, for it was an imprint of a major publishing house, Harper & Brothers. One of the purchasers was Colonel Ray Trautman of Bronxville, New York. To the inevitable question of "What did you do in the War, Daddy?" Colonel Trautman could give an unusual, but admirable reply: I put millions of pocket-sized books into the hands of Allied soldiers during World War Two." The Armed Services Editions were Col. Trautman's idea, and as head of the Army Library Service, he secured the support of the American Library Association and the participation of major publishers, which drove down the cost of printing paperbacks to 6 cents per copy, sold to the US government at cost. From 1943 to 1947, Trautman oversaw the publication of 1,322 titles printed to the extent of almost 123 million copies, providing an incalculable boost to the troops' morale. President Roosevelt wrote in 1942 that "A war of ideas can no more be won without books than a naval war can be won without ships." The Army agreed with the President's assessment, awarding Col. Trautman the Legion of Merit for his indispensable contributions to the war effort.

After the war, Col. Trautman moved to Bronxville, New York, and became a professor of library science at Columbia University. He was a coin collector, and a member of the American Numismatic Association during the 1950s and 1960s. The Colo-



Dr. William Sheldon (left), author of *Early American Cents*, and his inscription to Del Bland (right), on the first free fly of the Trautman-Bland copy of *Early American Cents*.

nel placed his address sticker on the inside front cover of his copy of *Early American Cents*, making it one of the few books that can be traced to the ownership of a man who distributed nearly 123 million of them to GIs. Col. Trautman, full of years and honors, passed away in 1982.

At some point, Col. Trautman's copy of *Early American Cents* came into the hands of a young numismatist named Delmar Bland. It was probably after 1970, when Del became a coin dealer, and certainly before September of 1977, when Dr. Sheldon passed away. Del (1933-2018), was a man of great stature, both in height (6' 5" in his stocking feet), and in the world of numismatics. A frequent presence on basketball courts, where he played competitively until age 75, he was also a dedicated wonk in the field of large cents. A visitor to his home in Mill Creek, Washington would find him surrounded by hundreds of black loose-leaf notebooks, each dedicated to a single Sheldon large cent variety. Within these notebooks were his comprehensive records of transactions involving the variety in public auctions, fixed price lists, and even private treaty sales, with descriptions recorded, photos of the variety, cross-references to earlier transactions, and annotations from his own life experience and research in the field. The archive Del built data point-by-data point was voluminous and irreplaceable. While Walter Breen began the celebrated *Encyclopedia Of Early United States Cents 1793-1814*, and Mark Borckardt completed it, the entire enterprise would have been literally impossible to undertake and complete without the active participation of Del and his invaluable archive of copper information.

Given Del's insatiable interest in large cents, it was all but inevitable that he would take Col. Trautman's copy of *Early American Cents*, not long after he purchased it, to Dr. William H. Sheldon for inscription. After all, Sheldon, by the early 1970s, was the grand old man of American numismatic scholarship. A second edition of *Early American Cents* had been published in 1958, under the auspices of John J. Ford, Jr., with the felicitous title of *Penny Whimsy*. Revised and updated, it attracted a whole new generation of collectors and dealers into the large cent field. When the Early American Coppers club was organized in 1967, there was only one man who could be honored by being named Member #1: Dr. William H. Sheldon. Inscribe the Trautman-Bland copy of *Early American Cents* Dr. Sheldon did, albeit a bit sparely: "Regards to Del: Wm. Sheldon." In light of subsequent events, no five words could be weighted with such a freight of irony.

In the early 1970s, Sheldon's reputation was still intact, but in the years to come it would all collapse into shards. His value system of grade number multiplied by basal value, which had held during the first part of the 1950s, rapidly unraveled thereafter, largely because the basal value of large cents did not rise as fast as the premiums paid for better-grade cents. On the other hand, as he lay dying in September of 1977, the American Numismatic Association was in the process of adapting his grading system, shorn of its value components, to cover all United States coins, not just large cents. And, of course, large cent collectors to this day collect by Sheldon varieties.

What few people in numismatics knew in the early 1970s, however, was that Dr. Sheldon had been living in genteel poverty since the mid-1940s. While serving in the Army as a Major in World War Two, he was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease, and provided with a disability income. Post-war, he was unable to find steady academic

work. At the University of Oregon Medical School, he had the title of "Clinical Professor," but drew no salary. Columbia University made him Director of the Constitution Laboratory, but fired him in 1953. Sheldon was able to support himself with temporary positions and writing income, but he no longer had the wherewithal to compete for choice large cents, which were constantly rising in value (ironically, largely due to the influence of his own books).

What he still retained, though, was a special relationship with the American Numismatic Society. In *Early American Cents*, he revealed himself as a generous donor to the ANS Museum, stating "I not long ago surrendered seven NCs to the ANS" (p. 55). As an open-handed donor and a venerated scholar, he was granted the highly unusual privilege of examining coins from the collection without the supervision of the curatorial staff. It is not known with certainty when the temptation presented by this position of trust became too much for the Doctor to resist, but it is known that by the mid-1970s, ANS curators were finding that large cents had been systematically switched out of the trays: in other words, the high-grade large cents that had been donated by Pittsburgh's George H. Clapp (ironically, a gift finalized in 1949, the very year that *Early American Cents* had been published), had been stolen, and replaced with lower-grade cents of the same variety. Museums reflexively are reluctant to publicize such losses; it is embarrassing to have been thus victimized, and it could have dampening effects on potential future donors. So, in the early 1970s, when Dr. Sheldon inscribed the Trautman-Bland copy of his book, Del had no way of knowing that Sheldon was a thief, and in danger of being exposed as such. Word began to get out as early as the end of 1976 that there were irregularities in the ANS collection, but no systematic effort was mounted to find the guilty party or to reclaim its stolen coins. Thus, Dr. Sheldon, although discredited in his profession, was spared the indignity of being exposed in his avocation. He died in September of 1977 still venerated by all but a handful of cognoscenti in the world of numismatics.

By the late 1980s, however, the leadership of the ANS was becoming more assertive in seeking to resolve the matter. Curator John Kleeberg did yeoman's service in documenting the extent of the thefts, and eventually the ANS turned to a new sheriff, Del Bland, to clean up the situation. Del was aided by the fact that the coin-switcher did not steal the detailed descriptions of the Clapp large cents, nor did he take the high-quality photographs Clapp had made of the coins. Most of all, though, Del turned to his peerless archive, and these three sources of information allowed him to prove that it was far worse than anyone knew. His report, issued to the ANS on December 17, 1990, proved that 129 Clapp coins had been switched out, and that all of the provenance trails for the stolen coins led to one collection: that of Dr. William H. Sheldon. It was now clear that Sheldon had had the motive, the opportunity, and, most damningly, the stolen goods.

The Bland Report spurred the ANS to action, and the highly respected scholar Eric P. Newman took the lead on a decade-long legal effort to recover the estrayed Clapp coins. The big problem was that the not-so-good doctor had sold his large cent collection, chock-full of stolen Clapp coins, to California collector Ted Naftzger in 1972, for \$300,000. Naftzger had retained most of them, but sold some to other advanced large cent collectors. The full story of the long, grinding, and mostly successful legal

battle to recover the stolen coins is told in *Truth Seeker: The Life of Eric P. Newman*, co-written by NBS Vice-President Len Augsburger, Roger Burdette, and your columnist. Reading it will raise your admiration for Eric P. Newman, and confirm your worst fears about the decline and fall of Dr. William Sheldon.

The story, with all of its manifold layers of irony, wends its way back to the Trautman-Bland copy of *Early American Cents*. How ironic could it be that a single copy of Sheldon's great book would be owned, first, by a fellow veteran of the Second War whose behavior, in sharp contrast to his own, was wholly honorable, and second, by the very man whose strict adherence to factual data brought down Sheldon's edifice of large cent deceit, and eventually, his entire reputation as paragon of the science of numismatics?

"Regards to Del—Wm. Sheldon" The doctor's inscription is like nothing else in numismatic history. One has to reach beyond the world of coins to even imagine something like. It is as if Billy the Kid had inscribed a copy of a book to Sheriff Pat Garrett (although the analogy is imperfect because Garrett pursued the Kid more obsessively, and, of course, also shot him dead). But if one accepts that there is nonetheless some merit in the comparison, it confronts us with one final irony: Pat Garrett, like Del Bland, stood 6' 5" tall.



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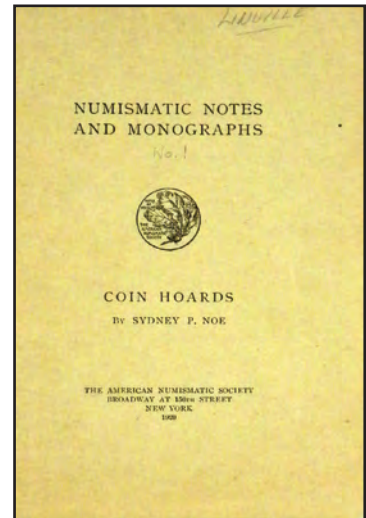
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Researching your Ancient Coins

By Shanna Schmidt

Buying an ancient coin can open up a new world of interest in a particular time period or area of the world. I work mainly with ancient coins from the western part of Turkey (Asia Minor), Greece, Italy and later Roman coins when the capital moved to Constantinople. For those that have bought a coin from my online shop or *vcoins*, you may have noticed that I attempt to write a little historical information about each piece that I sell. For me, just selling the coin isn't rewarding enough. Earning my living from coins sales is nice but I also enjoy to broaden my knowledge of the coin in some way whether it be learning about the ancient city whence it came, the time period of when it was struck or the inner meaning behind some of the symbolism. Republican coins can be difficult to research, especially the earlier ones when the wealthy moneyers were striking fairly anonymous coins (albeit with the name of the moneyer) and not much other than their names are known. The easiest coins to research are from the Roman Empire. The history of many of the emperors are well documented from ancient sources and once you learned the chronology it becomes fairly easy. Greek coins bring other challenges but normally when one understands who was fighting who at the time this brings further clarity as to why a coin might have been struck. For example, the images on Carthaginian coins (northern Africa) bear an uncanny resemblance to the coins of Syracuse. We now know that many die engravers from Syracuse found themselves creating dies for Carthage during times of conflict. Were it not for the differences in the reverse types (a horse for Carthage and a quadriga for Syracuse normally) most wouldn't be able to tell the difference.

So where does one start when you want to learn more about the coins that you have purchased? Naturally the internet can be extremely helpful when researching the history of your coins but there can be conflicting information. Having a numismatic library has been a lifesaver for me personally. I've been aggressively building my own library now for over 2½ years. The library assists me with historical information, finding pedigrees and also weeding out forgeries that come up for sale in the market. I recently had a customer tell me in shock that he couldn't believe that a particular auction house would sell a fake. My short answer: no one auction house knowingly sells fakes but every dealer has dealt with them at some point. The important thing is to remove the coin from the market and learn why the coin was a forgery so you can detect later examples. This is another reason why I cherish having a library. I certainly



don't have all the tools to detect forgeries but careful examination of other coins of the same die confirm authenticity and having the books to do this research is almost an imperative in my job.

It can be hard to keep up with all the new publications that come out in the market and for most folks it truly isn't necessary or cost efficient. My recommendation is to purchase all you can in the area in which you collect. This means the most current research as well as old auction catalogs where one may even find your purchased coin. I recently purchased the entire set of the ANS numismatic notes and monographs in the January New York Kolbe & Fanning auction (13 Jan 2018, lot 5). The set starts in 1920 and the last one was published in 2009. For example, the first monograph is titled *Coin Hoards* by Sydney P. Noe. Noe went on to publish the important die studies of Metapontum in No. 32 in 1927 (part one) and No. 47 in 1931 (part two). The series was finished by Ann Johnston in 1990 (part three).

I can't begin to tell you how illuminating this series has been for me for research. It may sound like a lot of books to store, but the earlier books through monograph 109 are small folio sizes (11.5mm x 17mm). Monographs 110-161 are slightly larger but still small (15.5mm x 23mm) when compared with the typical reference book. The knowledge gained is far more important however than the space it takes up on the shelf. What I especially enjoy about the ANS NNM series is the clear unfettered collaboration between dealers and academics from the ANS in working together to create useful coin studies. Consider what Noe wrote in his forward in the part one study on the coinage of Metapontum:

"Messrs. Spink & Son very kindly sent me for examination and study, the portion of the Taranto Hoard which was still in their possession and this comprised a considerable number of the pieces of Metapontum found. Dr. Jacob Hirsch courteously made arrangements whereby casts of the specimens of these coins in several of the Geneva sales were sent to me" (ANS NNM No. 32, *The Coinage of Metapontum*, page 2).

This just reinforces to me that academics and dealers should continue to work together and assist one another in creating important works like this. These relationships have benefited the entire community and continue to be important.

Another very useful and well-rounded series are the Numismatic Chronicle books that are issued annually by the Royal Numismatic Society of London. These books have been published since 1836 (in fact, the first issue has an impressive engraving of Joseph H. Eckhel, 1737–1798, on the frontispiece) and continue to present. You have to be a member of the society in order to get the book but it is well worth the nominal fee to receive such a useful reference. I haven't completed the set but I'm the proud owner of several volumes with my earliest being from 1881. The articles run the gamut in terms of coin research. I don't read these books as you would a fiction novel but I find myself looking through them for articles that might assist me with coin purchases I have made. The Numismatic Chronicle and the American Numismatic Society are just two of the journals that help aide numismatists and collectors in gaining knowledge. There are also very nice journals available from France, Germany and Italy. These have articles in English but of course if you don't read the language of the country they are less helpful in learning.

It can be bewildering to know where to start your research when you don't have a proper numismatic library. The Newman Numismatic Portal (nnp.wustl.edu) is an incredible reference tool for those who want to research and study U.S. coins. In lieu of a library this is a useful spot to start. Ancient coin collectors however find very little through the NNP that will assist in their search. Hopefully this changes over time but for the moment the majority of works are focused on the study and history of U.S. coinage.

Not to say that ancient collectors can't turn to the internet to serve their research needs. The American Numismatic Society has several databases that assist collectors who want to do research. For example there is *MANTIS* (The collection of the American Numismatic Society), *CRRO* (Coinage of the Roman Republic Online), *OCRE* (Online Coins of the Roman Empire), *PELLA* (Coinage of the Macedonian Kings of the Argead Dynasty) and a few others that are extremely helpful sites that can assist the collector in their research needs. The website address of all the sites that the ANS offers to the public is numismatics.org/resources. If you aren't a member of the ANS you should join. Putting these sites together take time and money and they are a wonderful resource that should be utilized by all.

For those who are searching for a pedigree there are a few options available. The least expensive is to go through one of the websites like *CoinArchives Pro* or *AC Search*. Both of these sites cost money but they provide you with auction records going back at least 18 years, sometimes even further back although the quality of the photos are less than desirable. It may seem like finding a needle in a haystack but it actually can happen that one comes across their very coin that was previously in auction. Auction records were routinely separated from their coins for the protection of the seller. Now that cultural property restrictions are becoming more stringent, keeping auction records is the new normal for collectors.

For those who want to research even further back than the year 2000, this necessitates a visit to one of a few dealers that maintain large catalog libraries or a visit to the ANS in New York. Paging through old catalogs is sometimes the only way to find a pedigree. Luckily there are services that can help to ease this huge burden. *Ex Numis* (ex-numis.com), the service provided by Dr. Jonas Flueck is one such service. Simply take a photo of your coin, insert it into the easy-to-use website and presto, you could end up finding a pedigree. The search engine uses picture recognition to match your coin with the catalog that it came from. It isn't 100% accurate yet but it is worth the nominal fee you pay for the amount of work that you save.

The alternative to all this is to purchase old catalogs of the major auction houses in Europe from around the 1920s until the onset of the internet and *CoinArchives* around the year 2000. This is an expensive endeavor but one that can be very gratifying and can provide you with knowledge of how the coin market has evolved over the last 100 years or so. It truly is interesting to see how coin types that we view as extremely rare now may have been more common at a different time. Now the market has evolved more into one where we see ancient coins recirculating over and over and less new finds for the obvious reasons. Looking at old catalogs proves that ancient coins were just as numerous then as they are now. Many numismatic libraries are coming to auction as older collectors and dealers go into retirement or die. Prices for

some of the scarcer titles can cost thousands but the majority of items are affordable especially when you are very specific with your collecting.

Of course, if all else fails then contact your trusted dealer and most of them would be happy to hunt for information for you on your coin or answer your questions. It is something that many dealers are excited to share with their customers. As time moves forward I'm certain that many out of print publications will start to be scanned for widespread use. Until that time, enjoying your own numismatic library is a wonderful thing if affordable. Learning the history of what you collect is an integral part of the collecting experience and the research you put into it can be very rewarding in the end.

NOTES

If you want to learn more about the author you can visit her website at shannaschmidt.com. Shanna is a full member of the PNG, the ANA, the ANS and a former board member of the IAPN.



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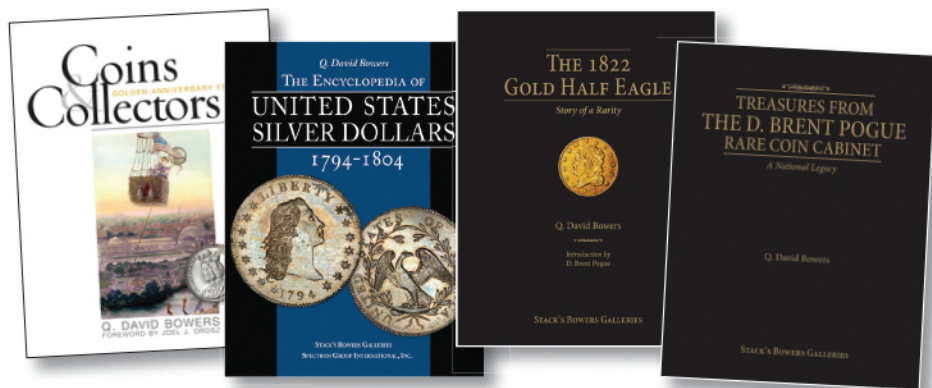
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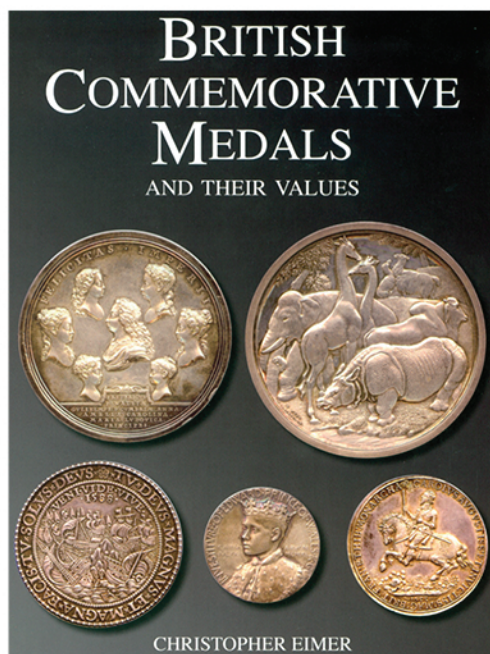
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